



Town of Simsbury

933 HOPMEADOW STREET ~ SIMSBURY, CONNECTICUT 06070

Wendy Mackstutis – First Selectman

**Regarding SB 278, AN ACT REQUIRING MULTICHANNEL VIDEO PROGRAMMING DISTRIBUTORS
TO PAY A COMMUNITY ACCESS PROGRAMMING FEE.**

Dear Committee Members,

As the First Selectman and longtime resident of the Town of Simsbury, I recognize that the importance of our local government channel cannot be overstated. Simsbury Community Television, recently renamed Simsbury Community Media (SCM), is a valued resource to the Town of Simsbury and its residents. They provide programming for seniors, coverage of local news and events on its public channel; Board of Education meetings, educational content, and school sports coverage on its education channel; and, most importantly to me, coverage of town meetings on its government channel.

This is how our local government is able to provide transparency, along with the ability to participate and engage our residents in the business of our town. Connecticut customers are “cutting the cable cord” to receive internet delivered video service, and as a result, due to the decades old funding methods, resources available to these nonprofits has declined to levels that threaten their existence. Relying on donations and outside agency support from the town for this critical service, which has been losing funding, is not enough.

The Connecticut Conference of Municipalities, or CCM, of which Simsbury is a member, recommends that all members support SB 278, which seeks to, among other things, require the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority to establish a fee paid by subscribers of video streaming, Internet access and cable television to support Regional Community Access Providers (CAPs) and Public, Educational, and Government Access (PEG) Programming channels.

The importance of Simsbury Community Media is clear. At the start of the Covid crisis, SCM adapted quickly to provide live coverage of virtual board and commission meetings to meet the Governor’s emergency order requiring access to coverage. Within two weeks, SCM was live streaming both the video and audio of all virtual town meetings and within six weeks had automated the process so the meeting coordinators could establish the live streaming/recording. Most recently SCTV scrambled to broadcast and stream hybrid meetings with high video and audio quality.

Prior to the pandemic, and now with the return of in-person and hybrid meetings, we are back to taking advantage of the robotic cameras in the two meeting rooms in town hall, along with in our two larger program rooms at Simsbury Public Library, where we can live stream meetings for our cable TV and YouTube channels, as well as recording them for cable channel playback and on demand viewing.

As a resident and elected official in the Town of Simsbury, I stand in favor of this bill. Without Simsbury Community Media, our residents would be at risk of losing their direct connection to town government, town events, educational content, sports, and entertainment.

Sincerely, Wendy Mackstutis

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